

FOCUS

on program management

Commander's corner

It is clear that we've gone through a year demonstrating how critical the Reserve forces are to the Air Force and our nation. Understanding the importance of maintaining communication, it's key that our lines stay open since you directly support that critical mission everyday. At the same time, I know what lies ahead are opportunities for growth, both personally and professionally.

Last month I spoke at the Annual Survey of the Law and Reserve Chaplain Service Conference.

During those events I challenged them in what I consider a dynamic environment. So too, do I challenge each of you.

I can't say enough about the importance of what you do. As I told the attorneys, paralegals, chaplains and chaplain assistants, like us here at ARPC, your mission is to provide a trained and ready force.

This, of course, includes medical readiness and the requirement for IMAs to complete their annual periodic health assessment. With compliance very low, they're hopefully hearing the message that they risk losing points and pay toward retirement if they don't get it done.

Now that we've delivered the message to our customers, we too have an important role to play. Here at ARPC we are challenged to ensure every piece of paper received gets filed and processed correctly. Likewise, I look to you to ensure the IMAs understand the seriousness of this requirement and the high level of attention it's receiving. Though we hope to deny no one pay or points, it is a very real option for non-compliance.

As we become more critical to our nation's defense and the strength of our service, I look to you to play a pivotal role in helping maintain a ready force of reservists now and into the future. For this and so much more I thank you all.

Col. K.C. McClain

RCPHA currency

Significant attention has been directed at improving IMA compliance with the annual Reserve Component Periodic Health Assessment since its implementation in Oct. 2001.

To be considered current, both medical and dental exams must have been accomplished within the last 12 months.

Overall currency rates remain just above 20 percent, with significant variation among MAJCOMs.

AF/RE and HQ ARPC/CC have directed a concerted effort to resolve this continuing problem.

Each of you received Col. K.C. McClain's letter setting the timeline and defining the consequences of noncompliance.

To assist you, a monthly roster of concurrent and medically restricted IMAs is being sent to each program manager, accompanied by instructions on how to use the products.

These lists are based on the MilPDS registry of IMAs, and report currency data and restriction codes as recorded in the members' medical/dental records.

The validity of the data is dependent on many factors, only some of which are under your control.

Every effort should be extended to reviewing, critiquing and helping to update these products.

The major limiting factor in accurately collecting exam data is the requirement that it be sent to and received by HQ ARPC/SGP.

Many of you have made constructive contributions to overcoming this challenge.

The Directorate for Health Services Individual Reserve Programs has heard your request for a common information system that would give you a real-time oversight of exam currency. Understanding this is important to you, they have made this system a priority.

Two current systems, PIMR and the web-based RCPHA, are under consideration.

Events since Sept. 11 have highlighted the importance and challenge of preparing IMAs for their role in the Total Force.

IMA statistics	
As of Jan. 30	
Total mobilized	3,506
Extensions	1,257
Replacements	44
DD 214s produced	1,964

Your efforts ensuring the medical and dental currency requirements for your IMAs are an important element in this preparation. ARPC/SG is committed to helping you meet this goal.

Address updates

IMAs need to be reminded to make sure they update address changes via our Customer Service Branch.

They can be reached via the ARPC Web site, arpc.afrc.af.mil, under "address change" or by calling 1-800-525-0102, ext. 71388, or DSN 926-6528.

Updated addresses made in WOTS alone will be automatically overwritten via weekly MilPDS refresh.

IMA Locator coming soon

In the near future an Access Database will be placed on the ARPC Web site for use by Program Managers and BIMAAs.

Since MilPDS came online, ARPC/SCQ lost the ability to provide information like they were able to under the legacy system.

They have been working on this database for quite a few months, and last month a test was sent out and feedback was requested on what they would like to see.

Based on the feedback, changes have been incorporated, and it has now been made available to ARPC employees.

More information will be provided as the service becomes available.

Annual tour request deadline

All FY03 IMA annual tour requests are due to ARPC by May 30.

Annual tour requests received at ARPC after the May 30 deadline must include a justification explaining why the request was late.

IMAs assigned after April 1 are not required to perform an AT unless necessary to meet mission or R/R year requirements.

Airline refunds/waivers

Air Mobility Command officials requested relief from all fees and penalties associated with cancelled air travel associated with Operations Enduring Freedom/Noble Eagle, for the period of Dec. 1, 2002 - Feb. 28, 2003.

Based on that request, the following carriers have agreed to provide relief and grant refunds and waivers as follows:

→ **American Airlines** will waive fees and penalties usually incurred by cancelled or revised travel plans.

Call customer service at 1-800-433-7300.

→ **AirTran Airways** will indefinitely waive change fees for all military personnel on personal travel.

Call customer service at 1-800-247-8726.

→ **Continental Airlines** will grant waiver of all fees for military personnel.

Call customer service at 1-800-523-3273.

→ **Delta Airlines** will allow refunds/reissues of any penalty type fare for a military member and any accompanying family member for no charge.

Call customer service at 1-800-221-1212.

→ **Frontier Airlines** will allow refunds and/or waivers. However, the standards are different based on whether it is an unused or partially used ticket.

Call customer service at 1-800-432-1359.

→ **Hawaiian Air** allows date changes without charge on restricted fares when military orders require the passenger to make the date change.

Call customer service at 1-800-367-5320.

→ **Midwest Express**

Refunds of non-refundable tickets will be issued for tickets based on very specific guidance available from their customer service agents.

Call customer service at 1-800-452-2022.

→ **Northwest Airlines** will allow full refunds without penalty or fees for the military member. The military member must provide a copy of their official orders or a directive advising leave has been cancelled.

Call customer service at 1-800-225-2525.

→ **Southwest Airlines** never charges a change or refund penalty on any tickets.

They will refund advanced purchase tickets for the men and women/their dependents that were affected by Operation ENDURING FREEDOM/NOBLE EAGLE.

Call customer service at 1-800-435-9792.

→ **United Airlines** plans to provide refunds and/or waivers; however, they have very specific rules and the traveler is advised to call their customer service agents for assistance.

Call customer service at 1-800-241-6522.

→ **US Airways** will allow military personnel holding tickets for travel through Feb. 15, who are affected by U.S. troop movement to apply for a full refund. Refunds for military dependents will be offered in the form of a travel voucher, less a \$50 handling fee.

Call customer service at 1-800-428-4322.

Tax relief for troops

WASHINGTON — Military members serving in designated combat zones in support of the war against global terrorism get a tax break from Uncle Sam.

Depending upon rank, eligible service members can exclude from federal income tax either all or some of their active duty pay — and certain other pays — earned in any month during service in a designated combat zone.

According to the Internal Revenue Service's Armed Forces' Tax Guide for 2002, "a combat zone is any area the President of the United States designates by executive order as an area in which the U.S. Armed Forces are engaging or have engaged in combat."

Current combat zones are Afghanistan, specified parts of the Kosovo area and the Persian Gulf region. The tax guide defines the qualifying areas.

Servicemembers in several other areas specified in law as "qualified hazardous duty areas" are eligible for the same tax breaks. Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Croatia have been listed since November 1995.

Some members providing direct support for military operations within a designated combat zone or qualified hazardous duty area may also be eligible for income tax exclusions. New for 2002 are service in Djibouti, Africa, after July 1, 2002; and service in the Philippines after Jan. 9, 2002, providing members' orders specify their duty is "in direct support of Operation Enduring Freedom - Philippines."

Servicemembers who serve one or more days

in a designated combat zone are entitled to federal tax exclusion benefits for that entire month, according to the IRS.

The downloadable Armed Forces' Tax Guide for 2002 <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p3.pdf> can be accessed on the Web at www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p3.pdf. It lists many, but not all, designated combat zones.

While military members can use the tax guide in preparing their 2002 federal tax returns, specific questions about designated combat zones should be directed to their unit personnel or pay officials or tax assistance officer.

The IRS guide notes servicemembers normally don't need to claim the combat zone exclusion or subtract eligible earning on their federal tax returns. The services normally have already excluded combat zone earnings from the taxable gross income reported on servicemembers' Form W-2s, the guide says.

Military retired pay and pensions aren't eligible combat zone income tax exclusions.

ARPC board schedule

The following boards are scheduled at ARPC:

❑ Special Selection/Review Board, March 12-14;

❑ Reserve School Selection Board, March 26-28;

❑ FY04 Reserve JAG and Chaplain Captain, Major and Lieutenant Colonel; and ANG Line and Nonline Captain, Major and Lieutenant Colonel Promotion Selection Boards, April 23-28;

❑ FY04 Reserve Line and Health Professions Captain and Lieutenant Colonel Promotion Selection Board, June 23-28;

❑ Special Selection/Review Board, Aug. 13-15;

❑ Reserve School Selection Board, Aug. 18-22;

❑ FY04 Reserve Brigadier General Qualification Board, Sept. 15-19; and

❑ FY04 Reserve Colonel Promotion Selection Board, Oct. 20-25.

Vicinity travel

Mobilized IMAs who require vicinity travel due to being billeted off base must have and additional signature.

Their order-issuing official must sign block 21a on their travel voucher prior to submitting it to Dobbins for vicinity mileage payment, unless authorized on their local amendment(s) prior to the conclusion of their tour.